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Mr. Taft's New Trust

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The Press of
The Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute
Hampton, Virginia
1909

The Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute

H. B. FRISSELL, Principal — F. K. ROGERS, Treasurer — H. B. TURNER, Chaplain

The Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was founded by Samuel C. Armstrong in 1868 for the education of Negro and Indian youth. It is situated at Hampton, Virginia, two miles from Old Point Comfort.

It aims to make useful, law-abiding, God-fearing citizens, who will teach and lead their people. Its fundamental work is character-building—education of hand, head, and heart.

The Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute is neither a state nor a Government school. Over $100,000 must be raised annually in donations for scholarships and general expenses.

Some needs of the school are:

Permanent academic scholarships		$2000
"	industrial "	800
500 Annual academic	"	70
500 "	industrial "	30
5000 Annual subscriptions for general purposes in amounts from $1 to $10		

Form of Bequest

I give and devise to the trustees of The Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, Hampton, Va., the sum of . . . . . dollars, payable . . . . . .

MR. TAFT'S NEW TRUST[1]

THERE is something very characteristic, and, in our judgment, significant and encouraging, in the assumption by Mr. Taft of the new trust that has come to him from Hampton Institute. It throws light on his views of the race difficulty and of his National policy regarding the whole question of the Negro. And if it be characteristic of a certain directness, simplicity, and breadth in the man, that is a fact of which the Nation may well take note.

The aim and spirit of Hampton are perfectly well known. They are not only very plainly defined in the official utterances of those in charge, but in the record of its efforts and accomplishment for many years. The aim is to help the youth, colored and Indian, who are brought under its training and influence to help themselves and their race by making them as efficient as possible in all the walks of life. Its spirit is that of "hope, faith, and charity;" of buoyant hope for a future humanly speaking of the darkest; of faith in the ultimate triumph of humanity in its slow struggle toward right living; of invincible charity—the charity

1 Editorial reprinted through the courtesy of the New York "*Times*."

which is "the greatest of these" and which in reality is love—for all human beings, whatever their race, creed, or their condition. Hampton tries, and with extraordinary intelligence, devotion, and success, to turn out workers, young men and women instructed and drilled in useful industry and in the conditions of usefulness, honesty, diligence, studiousness, enterprise, thrift, and, above all, in their sense of obligation toward the community of which they are a part. It is not too much to say that there is no other institution for instruction and training of the young in the United States that has done more in its field to advance the intelligence and efficiency of the American people through the beneficent influence of its labors than Hampton. If we credit it, as it has a right to be credited, with the origination and inspiration of the patient and fruitful work of Tuskegee, it may in all moderation be said that no institution has done as much.

Mr. Taft, in reply to the notification of his election as a member of the Board of Trustees of Hampton writes:

> I consider it an honor to be one of them, and shall be very glad to contribute what little I can to the continued success of the school.

That is straightforward. There is no qualification or timidity in it. At first blush one might say that the President of the United States should hesitate to connect himself in a responsible manner with an institution for the training chiefly of one of the races that make up the population of the country, and that the one toward which a serious and deep-rooted prejudice exists on the part of the other race in the section in which the former is most numerous. But it is to be remembered that Hampton is, by the very nature of its aim and spirit, a potent and permanent agency for dealing with that prejudice in the most humane and effective fashion. It is recognized in the South that where the Negroes are the most industrious, are self-supporting, moral, self-respecting, and respectful of the rights of others, there is least likelihood of trouble between them and the whites. The influence of Hampton is distinctly and effectually directed to making good citizens, not only of its own graduates, but of the race to which these belong, with whom they live, and whom in a proper measure they will, in their turn, influence. That is a task to which the President may well contribute.

The following address was made in Carnegie Hall, New York, under the auspices of the Armstrong Association, by Honorable William H. Taft, President Elect, in aid of Hampton Institute, Wednesday, February twenty-third, nineteen hundred and nine :

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen : We have ten millions of Negroes in the United States and of that ten millions I suppose nine millions live in the Southern states. Now, if you read the *Congressional Record*—I remember one distinguished Senator wanted to compel the public to read it, and there is certainly a great deal of useful learning in it ; there is much you can sympathize with ; in it and also much truth as well as a great deal of humor ; that is, it awakens your humor, sometimes at it and sometimes in sympathy with it. Now, as I said, if you study the *Congressional Record* you will see that there are some statesmen who say that it is impossible for the Negro and the white races to live together, that the solution is beyond the hope of human effort. Well, the ten millions are here and what are you going to do about it ? There are some who propose that we should move them bodily

out of the country. They don't say where, they don't say how, and they don't say when, but out of the country they are to go. And when there is an attempt to move five hundred of them out of the state in which it is said their relations to the whites are most inharmonious, you have a riot the minute you propose to move them, on the part of and by the very men with whom they cannot live.

It seems to me that this is the *reductio ad absurdum* with reference to the suggestion that expatriation is a solution of this question The solemn, scientific statement of a man that the races cannot live together, even though it appear in a *Congressional Record*, ought not to occupy our minds for a moment; because they *are* living together and they have lived together for over a hundred years. Now, the question is whether we or they, or all of us together, can make that living together better for both races. It is a problem that is set before us and it does not help us to say that we cannot work it out, because we have got to work it out.

Race feeling, race prejudice, is a fact, and a man who does not recognize it is just exactly as illogical as the man who says that ten millions of people now in

the country cannot live with the other seventy millions who are here, when they are already living here. There *is* race feeling and you cannot dispose of it by saying that it ought not to exist. It does exist, and that is part of the problems

Now, how are you going to wipe it out to the extent of making it so that it shall not produce injustice and a lack of harmony between the two races? Well, I think you are going to work it out. I believe in my heart you are going to work it out by making it to the advantage and profit of both races to see that it is not to the advantage of either to allow that race feeling to continue between them to the extent of making it difficult for them to live together.

The Negro is absolutely essential to the development of the South. His labor the South needs, and the more you instruct that labor the more valuable the Negro becomes to the South. Hence it is that the work of Hampton Institute has its intrinsic importance. It is the solution of the race question.

I do not believe, and I do not think most men believe, in too many crutches for people who are trying to learn to walk. But if you furnish them just

enough education to know how to use their minds and their hands and their legs in productive occupations, you give them the instrument by which they can help themselves, and then if they are a race which has the spirit to help itself the future is before them and the opportunity is theirs.

I do not profess to know as much about the Negro question—of course not—as these gentlemen [Dr. Ogden and Dr. Washington] who have spoken before me, but I have given a deal of attention to the matter. I have studied the statistics of the growth of the race, I have learned the amount of property that the race has accumulated, the reduction in the percentage of illiteracy, the amount of products brought forth under the hand of the Negro laborer and the Negro farmer in the South, and I say that no unprejudiced person can read those statistics without marveling that the Negro race has made the progress that it has made in the last fifty years under the burdens and obstacles that it has had to meet. The Negroes show self-initiative, they show self-help. Why, a race that produces a Booker Washington in a century ought to feel confident that it can do miracles in time.

I have been South recently, and there were a number of things that were brought home to me with much more emphasis, on account of my visit, than they ever had been before. One afternoon I drove out with a Southern lady and gentleman who said that they wanted to show me the inside of what I had seen in riding about the country, the Shiloh Orphanage, printed in letters that indicated that the man who handled the brush was not an artist. We went in there and we found a colored man, I should think about sixty years of age—the perfect image of Uncle Tom in Uncle Tom's Cabin—and he and his wife had taken an old farm with a lot of outbuildings on it and had gathered there all the little Negro waifs of the town of Augusta, and he was bringing them up to do useful jobs, trusting from week to week to get enough to feed those children and to clothe them. He took us into a room which would not have met the requirements of the modern school superintendent with reference to cubic feet of air, but there he gathered his thirty or forty nondescript Negro children, boys and girls of different ages, and he had them repeat the Twenty-third Psalm and then recite. Then he told them to "get

up and be polite" and they all got up and bowed to us and said, in unison, that they were glad to see us. I asked him how he got along. Well, he said, it was pretty hard work sometimes but they raised their own chickens and they had some cows; they sold milk and they sold eggs and they did what they could and the neighbors helped some. It was really a most pathetic scene. I tried to be as dignified as I could, but I did need my handkerchief before I was through. Some of those who were there sent small checks to help the old man along, and he circulated the report that we had contributed something to his aid. I received a telegram to-day saying that he had raised on the faith of that publication some three thousand dollars to pay off the mortgage on the old place and that he was going on with his useful work of saving those waifs. I instance that to show the spirit of initiative, the spirit of anxiety to do something for themselves that I saw among the Negroes in the South.

Another time I had the privilege of going to an institution founded by a Miss Lucy Laney, a Negro woman, I should say of some forty-five years. She has, I think, about five or six hundred students.

They began with the wrong idea as to education but now they have come to adopt the Hampton and the Tuskegee system, and are teaching the girls who are there useful knowledge. That woman was a graduate of Atlanta University, and she has this great institution that she is carrying on, deriving money from some generous supporters in the North; but there is an instance of initiative, of of self-help in the race which indicates that it is in favor of doing something itself and not waiting to be helped along with crutches. I rejoiced to find that her work had also the sympathy of Southern people of education and refinement and common sense.

It is very difficult, it is *very* difficult to speak in parliamentary language of the advocacy of the doctrine that we are to keep the Negroes in ignorance. I think the statement refutes itself—and it does not awaken the sympathy of the intelligent South. One of the difficulties in the South is that it is not the Negroes only who need education—and I mean that literally. The number of ignorant whites is enough to call the attention of our citizens to reduce the illiteracy and increase by industrial and other

education their ability to be good citizens in the community.

We sometimes get information and aid from sources where we would hardly expect to get it. I think the history of the improvement of the civil service of England shows that it came by way of India. And the history of the improvement in practical education in this country, industrial education, shows that it came through Hampton, through General Armstrong, in teaching the colored students and the Indians, and that now we, all over the North and the South, are profitting by the thousands whom he taught in that Institute. General Armstrong was a great man and coming generations will rise up and call him blessed. He taught the secret that will solve the race question in the South. The truth is that the success of Hampton and of Tuskegee is doing great good for the ignorant Southern white children.

I remember that Dr. Dillard told this story at the North Carolina dinner. He said that they were introducing some Italians into the South, and an old darkey inquired who those immigrants were and was told that they were Italians who were coming there. He shook his head and

said, "Wal," "I don' know how dat will be; we niggers has a hard enough time to s'port de white folks dat *is* here." Now I do not agree with that authority. I think it will help the South to have immigration. I believe in competition in labor as in everything else, and we have found on the Isthmus of Panama that our West Indian Negroes work a great deal better and do a great deal more satisfactory work now that we have introduced Spaniards, Italians, and Greeks, and I do not think immigrants would hurt at all. There is room enough in the South for all of them; the resources of the South are only scratched and if they go there it will help the Negro.

I think it is pretty hard to appeal always to New York and Boston audiences for charitable contributions. I think the West ought to pay for part of this work that is done for the benefit of the whole country, and I hope that meetings of this kind may be held in Cincinnati and Chicago and other places, and that such pictures as we have had to-night may be presented to those audiences in order to make them generous and just.

It is true that the ancestors of the Negroes to-day were brought here against

their will. The Negroes who are here are Americans ; they are entitled to our aid and sympathy. This is the only country and the only home they know. Ours is the only flag they can live under and it is a flag they have shown themselves willing to die for. I should feel very much discouraged if I did not believe that the Negro was going to work out his own salvation. I believe it from what I have already said, and I have had the pleasure of addressing a number of Negro audiences in the South. I remember one audience, a Young Men's Christian Association audience, where Rev. Dr. Walker, one of the most eloquent men in the country, black or white, testified to the harmony that exists between the two races. He said, "We are happy here. This is the only place we want to live in until we go to Glory, " and he added " we propose to stay here until we do go to Glory."

Now the great aid, the man who is able to assist more than we can even though we contribute our money, is the Southern white man ; and as the mass of Southerners grow more intelligent to see what the good of the country demands, they will certainly see that it is to their advan-

tage to have the Negro increase in intelligence, in providence, and in industry. I do not see why we may not reasonably take courage and believe that the elements are already there in the South to work out this problem, and to uplift this race to a moral and a spiritual plane that will insure its happiness.

I am sure that no man can imagine the humiliation and agony of spirit which the Negroes have to suffer in their struggle upward when they encounter race feeling and the injustices to which it leads. But it may help, I hope it will, to give them stronger character; there is a future before them, if they overcome these obstacles, which is well worth the effort. Personally I think it is one of the great problems that we have before us in this country. I believe in the ultimate justice of all the American people. I believe also in their good sense, and when a policy involves justice and good sense I think the American people can be trusted to urge that policy and carry it on to its ultimate conclusion.

Now one of the things which a man who hasn't any money is able to do is to advise the man who has money what to do with it. I know that, changing the situ-

ation somewhat, a man who does not have to appoint a Cabinet, certainly knows how to appoint it, for I have had a great deal of advice on that subject. But, seriously, I do think that there is nothing that offers such an opportunity for the wealthy men of this country who have money and do not know what to do with it, as the cause of Negro industrial education in the South, and I agree with the last gentleman who addressed us that it does not speak well for the intelligence of those who have money to distribute that Hampton is now seeking two millions of dollars as an endowment, and that Tuskegee needs as much more, when both institutions have demonstrated their usefulness and have shown that they offer the only remedy for the solution of one of the greatest questions that has ever presented itself to the American people.